



M. ANANTHASAYANAM
AYYANGAR



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M. ANANTHASAYANAM AYYANGAR

Madabhooshi Ananthasayanam Ayyangar was born on 4 February 1891 at Tiruchanur near Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh. After finishing his initial education in the Devasthanam High School at Tirupati, Ayyangar went to Madras for higher studies. After obtaining his B.A. degree from the Pachaiyappa's College, Madras, he earned a degree in Law from the Madras Law College in 1913.

Starting his career as a Mathematics teacher in 1912, he ventured into the legal profession in 1915. Within a short period of time, he established himself as a professional lawyer and, with his remarkable ability to memorise cases, soon acquired the reputation of being a 'walking digest of case laws'. Ayyangar did not treat the profession only as a means to earn a living. He was greatly interested in streamlining the judicial system of the country to suit the needs of the people of India rather than see it as an extension of the British judicial system. He, therefore, strongly underscored the need of the independence of the Judiciary and urged the Government of India to raise the status of the Federal Court to that of a Supreme Court. He was deeply concerned about the humiliation and the hardships faced by the Indian people due to the vesting of the ultimate appellate authority of India's judicial system in the hands of the Privy Council in England. Ayyangar was also the President of the Bar Association of Chittoor.

Ayyangar plunged himself into the freedom movement at a very early age. Within his home State, he was one of the stalwarts of the Indian National Congress which was spearheading the National Movement against British colonialism. Responding to Gandhiji's call for 'Non-cooperation' with the British establishment, Ayyangar suspended his legal practice for one year during 1921-22.

When the Congress withdrew its policy of boycott of Councils and decided to contest the elections for the Central Legislative Assembly in 1934, Ayyangar was elected to the House with an overwhelming majority. The objective of the Congress in contesting the election was to fight the Government from within. Armed with facts and figures and by his oratory, Ayyangar soon built up the reputation as a forceful debater in the Assembly. From the back benches, he moved on to the front benches and then came a time when not a single day passed without his saying something forceful in the Assembly against the Government and in the interests of the

Congress and the National Movement. This exceptional performance of Ayyangar in the Assembly provoked a European writer to describe him as the 'Emden of the Assembly', alluding to the German submarine of that name, which caused untold havoc to the Allied Navy in the early days of the Second World War.

Between 1940 and 1944 Ayyangar suffered imprisonment for nearly three years, first for taking part in the 'Individual Satyagraha Campaign' and later in the 'Quit India Movement' of 1942.

Apart from taking active part in the movement for political freedom for the country, Ayyangar was involved in various other activities aimed at the social transformation of the deprived sections of the society. Inspired by Gandhiji's constructive programmes for fighting social evils like untouchability, Ayyangar was in the forefront of such movements launched to ensure temple entry for all segments of the society in his home State.

He also took keen interest in the co-operative movement and in the activities of the local self Government institutions in Chittoor. In fact, his first exposure to a representative institution was with the Municipal Council of Chittoor, to which he was once elected during the early days of his political career. Later, he was elected Director of the Co-operative District Bank of Chittoor.

Ayyangar was one of the leading leaders of the Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh and held several important positions in the Party before Independence. He served as President, District Congress Committee, Chittoor. Subsequently, he was nominated to the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee and the All India Congress Committee. During 1946-47, he was also the Secretary of the Congress Party in Parliament.

Ayyangar served as a member of the Constituent Assembly. In the wake of the decision to separate the Constitution-making functions of the Constituent Assembly from its legislative functions and the consequent election of G.V. Mavalankar as the Speaker of the Constituent Assembly (Legislative), Ayyangar was chosen to be its Deputy Speaker. He also served in the Steering Committee of the Constituent Assembly. During 1950-52, Ayyangar continued to be the Deputy Speaker of the Provisional Parliament. When an Estimates Committee was constituted for the first time by the Provisional Parliament in 1950, Ayyangar was the choice to be its Chairman. He skilfully conducted its meetings and established a name for the Committee.

When the First Lok Sabha was constituted in 1952, Ayyangar was the unanimous choice to be its Deputy Speaker. While discharging his duties as the Deputy Speaker, Ayyangar had the added responsibility of being the Chairman of the

Estimates Committee of the Lok Sabha for two more years and that of heading the Railway Convention Committee in the next two years until he was elected unanimously to preside over the Lok Sabha on 8 March 1956, on Speaker Mavalankar's sudden demise.

Thus, coming to occupy the exalted office of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha was a culmination of a legislative career which began with the Central Legislative Assembly in 1934. By now Ayyangar had already proved himself to be an outstanding parliamentarian with a rich fund of experience and knowledge of the working of parliamentary institutions and their practices and procedures. He was deeply committed to upholding the parliamentary norms, and was gifted with a tremendous sense of humour which not only helped enliven parliamentary proceedings but also at times enabled him to make a point more forcefully and at the same time pleasantly on the floor of Parliament.

During his brief tenure as the Speaker of the First Lok Sabha, Ayyangar had proved himself a worthy inheritor of the high traditions in parliamentary life established by Speaker Mavalankar. From the very beginning, it was Ayyangar's constant endeavour to uphold and strengthen the traditions and conventions already brought into India's parliamentary system. Through his unbiased conduct, he endeared himself to all sections of the House. Though there was no official Leader of the Opposition in the House, Ayyangar treated the stalwarts of the Opposition with due respect and regard and always sought to ensure a balance between the Government and the Opposition. When the Second Lok Sabha was constituted in 1957, Ayyangar was once again the unanimous choice of the House to be its Speaker for the next five years.

The innumerable rulings and observations made by Ayyangar as Speaker would amply demonstrate his political vision, legal acumen, mastery of and respect for the parliamentary procedures, understanding of the dynamics of governance and identification with the larger problems and causes of the country. On the points raised before him, he ruled with brevity and clarity. To his credit are a number of Rulings and Directions which settled many complex parliamentary issues in those formative years of the Indian Republic.

Ayyangar's observations on Adjournment Motions, Bills, Resolutions, Standing Committees, Calling Attention Notices, etc. are today integral part of the large volume of settled parliamentary practices and procedures in India. His rulings on the subject of Questions, Quorum and policy statements being made by Ministers outside the House when the House is in Session, have been path-breaking. Ayyangar clearly laid down the rule that as a matter of courtesy to the House, all enunciations of policy or change of policy or announcements

of new policy must first be brought to the notice of the House while the House was in Session. He was firm in dealing with members on issues which had a bearing on the decorum in the House or respect to the Chair.

The issue of Indian Parliament's relations with other Parliaments of the world also received Ayyangar's special attention. For this purpose, he led several Parliamentary Delegations to other countries and to the Conferences of International Parliamentary Associations. He was the Leader of the Indian Parliamentary Delegation to the 49th Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Tokyo in 1960. He also took keen interest in the Conferences of Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies in India. He saw in these Conferences opportunities to evolve uniform practices and procedures in the Indian Legislatures and to discuss matters of common parliamentary interest.

While remaining an active parliamentarian, and in later years, after leaving active political life, Ayyangar continued to be associated with a large number of socio-cultural and educational organisations. These organisations included the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the Ram Vilas Sabha, the Dramatic Associations of Chittoor, the Constitution Club, and the Indian Association of World Federal Government.

Ayyangar was elected to the Lok Sabha for the third time in the General Elections of 1962. However, he resigned his membership soon after the elections to serve as the Governor of Bihar. That was to mark the end of the nearly three decade-long distinguished parliamentary career. Undoubtedly, through this long period of service, the institution of Parliament and the country in general benefited enormously from Ayyangar's knowledge, his parliamentary skill and his broad vision of politics, religion and of national problems.

The praise showered on Ayyangar on relinquishing the office of the Speaker in 1962 echoed the glowing tributes paid to Dadasaheb Mavalankar in 1956. It was between these two eminent Speakers that the foundations of a strong and healthy parliamentary culture were laid in India. India's democratic institutions owe a great deal to their profound commitment to parliamentary institutions, to their alertness in upholding the dignity of the House, the prestige of the members and the ideals of parliamentary democracy and to their relentless efforts in evolving sound parliamentary procedures and practices.

After parliamentary life, Ayyangar's greatest contribution, perhaps, was in the field of education. An erudite scholar, Ayyangar was an authority on Indology, Comparative Religion, Philosophy, Sanskrit, Sanskrit Literature and on a wide spectrum of other subjects. Throughout his life, he took great interest in the study and propagation of Sanskrit and Indian

Culture. He served for sometime as a Member of the Central Advisory Board of Education and later as the Chancellor of the Rishikul University at Haridwar. Recognising his contributions to the field of learning, he was conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature by the Shri Vaishnava Theological University, Vrindavan, in 1954. Besides regularly editing a Telugu weekly Sri Venkatesa Patrika, Ayyangar also had a book on Indian Parliament, Our Parliament, to his credit.

Ayyangar believed in the essential unity of mankind and was an advocate of secularism and a vocal champion of the cause of religious unity in the country. He was greatly pained by the virus of communalism and the misuse of religion for political purposes. He believed that the best way of educating people about the dangers of communalism was by creating mass awareness about the true content of all religions. According to him, religions evolved primarily to help remove differences between man and man and to inculcate the feeling of brotherhood in man and thereby to elevate him.

Equally significant were his views on the insidious caste system in the country. Ayyangar was one of the earliest national leaders during the struggle for Independence to join the struggle against the evils of untouchability and caste system. He firmly believed that historically caste system was not an original part of the Indian social fabric but rather only a later addition to it. According to Ayyangar, there was no such thing as a high caste or a low caste but only a higher state of consciousness and a lower state of consciousness, neither of which had anything to do with birth.

After serving a full term as the Governor of Bihar, Ayyangar retired from active political life and returned to his hometown, Tirupati, to spend the evening of his life. Even at this stage, Ayyangar remained very active. Work for the Sanskrit Vidyapeeth at Tirupati and several charitable organisations kept Ananthasayanam Ayyangar busy till he breathed his last on 19 March 1978, at the age of 87.

Condoling his death, the Prime Minister, Shri Morarji Desai said, "He was a person with independent views and expressed them independently too. His services to the country were varied. He took part in the non-cooperation movement and was deeply devoted to Parliament and its procedures and to democracy. In his death the country had lost a great patriot". Offering his condolences, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Shri Y.B. Chavan said, "Shri Ayyangar was a scholar of distinction and very skillful in parliamentary debate. He rendered great service during the Freedom Struggle. Active till his last days, he always thought of the problems of the country and was clear in his views. His death was a great loss to the Parliament and the country".